

**Appropriations committee public hearing testimony, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017**  
**By Sonja Venetianer, 17 Berkshire Drive, East Hampton, CT 06424**

Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Sonja Venetianer. I am 9 years old and in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. I live with my parents, dog and cat in East Hampton. I never lived anywhere else and I love my town, neighborhood and school. I go to Center Elementary School. My teacher is Ms. Sawyer and she is awesome. I have come here to read you my speech. This speech is for my town, and everybody in it.

I want to change the fact that the state is planning to take away 3.1 million dollars in funding, from East Hampton. That is 1.6 Million Dollars in Education Cost Share and Special Education Funding. On top of this, 1.5 Million Dollars to support the State Teachers Retirement System. This is what my mom says!

It's kind of confusing to me but my mom says that 3.1 Million Dollars are about 38 teachers and that really put it into reality for me. I don't think that this is good for our education. In Ms. Sawyers class right now, we have 24 students. That's actually a lot, if you think about it. A lot of people need help in my class, including me sometimes. If there are any more people coming into classes, the people that really need help, won't get any help at all! The size of my new 5<sup>th</sup> Grade classroom is predicted to be 28. This is a lot! 28 children in one classroom is without the state funding cut. With the cut it could easily go to 32 children in one classroom. I don't think that this should be acceptable for any grade or school. The school I go to is not fancy at all. Everything is very old and we are always too hot or too cold because the boiler is broken and there is no money to replace it. I love my school because of the teachers! You can tell how much they care.

Another worry that I have, is that we most likely are going to lose our Middle and High School sports. My friend Kristina is in Middle School and loves Cross Country. I would hate for her and so many others to not be able to do this anymore. I also hope that for me and my classmates these sports are available in the coming years! I believe that being busy keeps you out of trouble, team spirit is important to build a strong community.

My Mom also mentions that there will be most likely a big town tax increase to lower the impact of the cuts by the state. We have many elderly and retired neighbors that can't afford any more taxes. My neighbors have been talking about moving out of state and their main reason is that it's too expensive. I will miss them very much if they would leave. Our other neighbor just got sick and had to retire. We really hope that he is able to stay in his house!

You have the future of so many children in your hands and you want to do right by all of them. After listening to my speech, I hope you will change your mind and fight for the small towns as well. Thank you for your time and listening to me, a 9 year old girl, with hopes and dreams. Thank you again and have a nice day!